

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 SY-05 OPR-02 /087 W

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O R 231520Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9730

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB GR ASEC

SUBJ: LABOR: MEETING OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ERUPTS  
INTO VIOLENCE

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/EX

1. A MEETING OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN A DOWNTOWN AREA  
THEATER (NEAR OMONIA SQUARE), WHICH COMMENCED AROUND  
9:30 A.M. ON JULY 23, ERUPTED INTO VIOLENCE LATER IN  
THE MORNING. THE GOVERNMENT HAD AUTHORIZED THE HOLDING  
OF THE MEETING BUT HAD BANNED ANY DEMONSTRATION IN THE  
STREETS. THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO HIGHLIGHT THE  
ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF THE WORKERS, E.G. FOR GREATER  
UNEMPLOYMENT ALLOWANCES, FOR SHORTER WORK HOURS,  
FOR BETTER COVERAGE OF CRAFTS ENGAGED IN HAZARDOUS WORK,  
FOR BETTER RETIREMENT BENEFITS, AND FOR THE INITIATION  
OF A PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM TO COUNTERACT UNEMPLOYMENT  
IN THE CONSTRUCTION FIELD.

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2. THE VIOLENCE BEGAN AMONG THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS THEMSELVES WHEN ONE GROUP CALLED FOR THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING TO DEMONSTRATE IN THE STREETS DESPITE THE BAN AGAINST DOING SO AND OTHERS OPPOSED THIS ACTION. THE POLICE INTERVENED TO RESTORE ORDER AND THE VIOLENCE SPREAD WHEN THE WORKERS TOOK TO THE STREETS. THE POLICE RESORTED TO THE USE OF TEAR GAS, WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD BEEN SANCTIONED IN ADVANCE BY PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS, TO DISPERSE THE DEMONSTRATORS AND THE DEMONSTRATORS STARTED THROWING ROCKS AND OTHER OBJECTS AT THEM. BARRICADES WERE PUT UP, BY BOTH SIDES APPARENTLY, AND SEVERAL POLICE VEHICLES SET ON FIRE. AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE AND THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF SEVERAL INJURIES, INCLUDING AMONG THE POLICE. THE DISORDER CONTINUES AND THE SITUATION IS STILL NOT UNDER CONTROL. APPARENTLY SOME UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAVE JOINED THE DEMONSTRATORS.

3. THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HAD EARLIER PLANNED TO STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DEMANDS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MEETING HELD THIS MORNING. HOWEVER, THE FEDERATION OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS OF GREECE ANNOUNCED ON JULY 22 THAT IT HAD CALLED OFF THE STRIKE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT STATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES HAD ASSURED THE FEDERATION THAT ITS MAIN DEMANDS WOULD BE MET AND THE FEDERATION THEREFORE SUSPENDED THE STRIKE. HOWEVER, THE STRIKE "COORDINATING COMMITTEE" OF THE FEDERATION DISAGREED WITH THIS DECISION, AND URGED THE WORKERS TO MEET AND DEMONSTRATE NEVERTHELESS. (THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK WORKERS OR GSEE TOLD US THAT THE GSEE PLANNED TO ISSUE A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE ACTIVITY OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. HE ASSERTED THAT THE GSEE WAS UNABLE TO CONTROL THE DEMONSTRATORS AND INDICATED THAT THE DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZERS HAD ACTED OUTSIDE OF THE RECOGNIZED AND TRADITIONAL LINES OF FEDERATION LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY.)

4. COMMENT: BEFORE THE 1967 MILITARY COUP, THE FEDERATION OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS WAS GENERALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSIDERED AS BEING LEFTIST IN ORIENTATION (WITH SOME OF ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS COMMUNIST DOMINATED) AND HAD OFTEN PROVIDED CADRES WHICH WOULD "TAKE TO THE STREETS" IN FURTHERANCE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEMANDS OF THE WORKERS. THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF THE FEDERATION IS COURT-APPOINTED. END SOMMENT.

5. THE MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT

CONDEMNING THE ACTIONS OF THE CONSTRUCTION  
WORKERS. THE MINISTRY POINTED OUT THAT THE LEGITIMATE  
DEMANDS OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HAVE BEEN  
LARGELY MET AND THIS DEMONSTRATION WAS NOT JUSTIFIED.  
THE MINISTRY BLAMED THE GROUP WHICH CALLS ITSELF THE  
"COORDINATING COMMITTEE" AS BEING RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THE VIOLENCE THAT OCCURRED AND POINTED OUT THAT  
ITS MOTIVES ARE OTHER THAN THE PROMOTION OF THE  
INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS. KUBISCH

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CONSTRUCTION, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, MEETINGS, LABOR FORCE, LABOR DISPUTES, LABOR STRIKES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 JUL 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975ATHENS05567  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750254-0521  
**From:** ATHENS  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750727/aaaaayef.tel  
**Line Count:** 124  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 APR 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <23 APR 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** LABOR: MEETING OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ERUPTS INTO VIOLENCE  
**TAGS:** ELAB, ASEC, GR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006